



Campaign Model for the 2024 Regional Head Election in Asahan Regency and Tanjung Balai City (Comparative Study of Single and Multi-Candidate Candidates)

Rahmi Fitra Ulwani Siahaan^{1*}, Ahmad Tamrin Sikumbang², Anang Anas Azhar³, Ahmad Sujai Tanjung⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Email*: fitarahmi13@gmail.com

Received: 28 December 2025

Revised: 27 January 2026

Accepted: 23 February 2026

Abstract

Differences in the structure of competition in the election of regional heads are important to study because they determine how candidate pairs design messages, choose communication channels, mobilize voters, and build political legitimacy. This study aims to find and compare the campaign models of candidate pairs in the 2024 Regional Elections in Asahan Regency and Tanjung Balai City, as well as identify opportunities and communication barriers. The research uses a phenomenological qualitative approach with a comparative study type. A total of 12 informants were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation, then analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña models through collection, condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The validity of the data is strengthened through triangulation of sources and theories. The results of the study show that Asahan Regency implements a legitimacy-participatory campaign model that emphasizes motivational communication, consultative dialogue, village network mobilization, and increased voter participation. The city of Tanjung Balai implements a competitive-adaptive framing-disruption model through candidate differentiation, management of local issues, digital communication, relational networks, and viral momentum. These findings confirm that the structure of the competition determines the objectives, messages, channels, organization, and measure of campaign success. Further research is recommended to test both models through quantitative approaches or mixed methods.

Keywords: Political Campaign, Political Communication, Single Candidate, Multi-Candidate, Political Participation

Publisher's Note:

Yayasan Darussalam Bengkulu stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright



2026 by the author(s).

License Yayasan Darussalam, Bengkulu, Indonesia.

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).



INTRODUCTION

The 2024 simultaneous regional head election (Pilkada) in North Sumatra displays two contrasting political dynamics between Asahan Regency and Tanjung Balai City. Asahan is an area with a single candidate, where Taufik Zainal Abidin Rianto's partner faces an empty box. This situation demands a political communication model based on public legitimacy, not just electoral competition (Asahan KPU, 2024). Meanwhile, the city of Tanjung Balai presents a fight between three candidate pairs, namely Mahyaruddin Fadly, Waris Rolel (incumbent), and Eka Darwin, which shows the intensity of competition and differentiation of campaign messages in the more competitive public space (KPU Tanjungbalai, 2024). These two arenas show fundamental differences in how candidates interpret victory: Asahan is oriented toward strengthening participation so that votes do not fall on empty boxes. At the same time, Tanjung Balai focuses on fighting for support among candidates through a narrative of fiercely competitive superiority.

The phenomenon of a single candidate in Asahan presents a paradoxical form of electoral democracy: on the one hand it reflects a solid political consensus, but on the other hand it poses a challenge to public participation and political legitimacy. This condition demands a political communication approach that emphasizes persuasion and moral symbolism so that people are still encouraged to participate. It is different from Tanjung Balai, where the dynamics of multi-candidate competition create a more open political negotiation space, while encouraging candidates to package campaign messages in a more aggressive, differentiated, and segmentative way. These two forms of contestation present relevant academic questions: how winning campaign models are designed and implemented in the context of different competition structures, and the extent to which political communication is a determining factor for success in each region (Aguilar-Pardo, 2024; Karwacka, 2022; Sofyan, 2025).

The analysis of these two regional election contexts is important because both are in a relatively similar social environment, namely marked by the dominance of Muslim voters of more than 90 percent, the strong network of mosques and taklim assemblies, and social relations that are strongly influenced by religious norms and authorities. This similarity shows that socio-religious variables provide a relatively equal political communication arena for candidates (Koa, 2021). Although the religious base is the same, the communication orientation differs: in Asahan there is more emphasis on the moral invitation to participate, while in Tanjung Balai there is more emphasis on the narrative of change, program competition, and leadership style. This shows that similarity in the social base does not guarantee similarity in communication approaches, because the form of competition determines the logic of the chosen strategy (Hasan, 2024).

This situation opens up an opportunity to examine the winning campaign model in more depth by using the campaign communication model of Nowak & Warneryd (2022). This model views campaigns as a process that involves five main elements: the intended effect, the object of the campaign, the target, the message and communication channel (message & channel), and the obtained effect (Moret-Soler, 2022). The effectiveness of winning in local elections cannot be separated from the three main pillars of political communication, namely campaigns, witnesses, and communication media. Campaigns serve as the main platform for building public image and trust; witnesses are a mechanism to secure votes and the legitimacy of results; while the media plays a role in expanding the reach of messages and creating a resonance of opinions among the public (Orosa, 2022).



The research gap arises when the context of local and regional political campaigns, particularly in single-candidate versus multi-candidate schemes, has not received much attention in the international literature. Global studies are still centered on presidential elections, parliaments, and digital contests in developed countries. In contrast, campaign dynamics in developing countries such as Indonesia, with strong socio-religious characteristics, have not been integrated into global discourse. There is almost no research that distinguishes the winning campaign model between regions that face direct political opponents and regions that deal with empty boxes. This gap presents a great opportunity for research to offer a new perspective on adaptive political communication in local elections, which combines campaign analysis, voter participation, and socio-religious contexts that shape patterns of political legitimacy at the regional level.

The local political reality depicted in the Asahan and Tanjung Balai Regional Elections shows a gap between *das Sein* and *das Sollen* in the practice of electoral democracy. Empirically, the winning campaign model in both regions is still dominated by a pragmatic approach oriented toward electoral victory and short-term support mobilization. At the same time, normatively, local democracy should demand participatory, dialogical, and public-educated political communication practices. This gap shows that political campaigns have not fully functioned as an instrument of public political education, but still focus on symbolic transactions and mastery of power discourses. This condition reinforces the urgency of this study to review the political communication model carried out by the pair of regional head candidates in two different competitive contexts, and to see the extent to which the strategy can approach the ideal of substantial democracy. This study aims to find a campaign model for regional head candidate pairs in the 2024 Regional Elections in Asahan Regency and Tanjung Balai City, analyze the differences in campaign models between regional head candidate pairs in the 2024 Regional Elections in Asahan Regency and Tanjung Balai City, and analyze the opportunities and obstacles of the campaign model of regional head candidate pairs in the Regional Elections in Asahan and Tanjung Balai Regencies.

The urgency of this research lies in its efforts to fill the gap in the study of local political campaign models in Indonesia, especially in the context of comparisons between single and multi-candidate candidates. This study offers a new perspective by focusing on how political communication is constructed, conducted, and evaluated in two contrasting competitive situations. This approach not only expands the empirical scope of the study of political communication but also strengthens understanding of how democracy works at the local level, with all its limitations and peculiarities. Through the application of Nowak and Warneryd's campaign communication model, this study expands the model's function from the context of commercial campaigns into the realm of local Indonesian politics. In addition, this research is expected to enrich political communication theory by emphasizing the relationship between campaign models, witness networks, and the use of communication media as an integrated system in building legitimacy and public participation.

METHODS

This study uses a phenomenological qualitative approach with a comparative study type (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Weyant, 2022). This approach aims to understand the subjective experience of political actors in designing and running a winning campaign model in two different competition contexts, namely the Asahan Regency Regional Election with a single candidate and the Tanjung Balai City Regional Election with multiple candidates. This research was conducted in



two administrative areas in North Sumatra Province, namely Asahan Regency and Tanjung Balai City. The informants in this study were selected using the purposive sampling technique, which is the deliberate determination of informants based on the consideration that they have knowledge, experience, and involvement that is relevant to the focus of the research. The composition of the research informants consisted of 12 people who were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in the 2024 Regional Election campaign process in Tanjung Balai City and Asahan Regency.

The main instrument is the researcher himself, because in qualitative research the researcher plays a direct role in determining the focus of observation, collecting data, interpreting information, and understanding the meaning that arises from the informant's experience in the field. The auxiliary instruments in this study are interview guidelines and observation guidelines. Data collection was carried out through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation (Baum, 2021; Gleeson, 2021; Lincoln, 2024). In-depth interviews are conducted in a semi-structured manner with predetermined informants, both from the winning team and the community (Takona, 2024). Participatory observation was carried out to directly observe campaign activities, interaction patterns between the winning team and the community, and various forms of political communication that took place in the field (Gleeson, 2021). Documentation is used to strengthen and verify data from interviews and observations through official archives, KPU and Bawaslu reports, mass media news, campaign materials, photos of activities, and social media publications.

Data analysis uses the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, which includes four main stages: data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2020). The coding process is carried out manually to find meanings related to communication models, media use, witness management, and the dynamics of voter participation. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources by comparing information from the winning team leader, public relations coordinator, volunteers, and the community, and checking the consistency between the results of interviews, observations, and documentation (Flick, 2020). This study also uses theoretical triangulation by linking field results to the Nowak and Warnery campaign models, Grunig and Hunt's winning campaign models, and the political participation theory of Verba, Nie, and Kim (Flick, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Campaign Model for Candidates for Regional Head of Asahan Regency and Tanjungbalai City

The findings in this section focus on the winning campaign model as a series of political communication practices designed, executed, and evaluated by candidate pairs and their supporting machines in the context of competitive contestation. This framework of findings positions campaigns, witness networks, and media use as a locked unit, because persuasion is not only determined by the content of the message, but also by the accuracy of the target, narrative consistency, and organizational discipline in securing information distribution and support at the community level (Rejekiningsih et al., 2024).

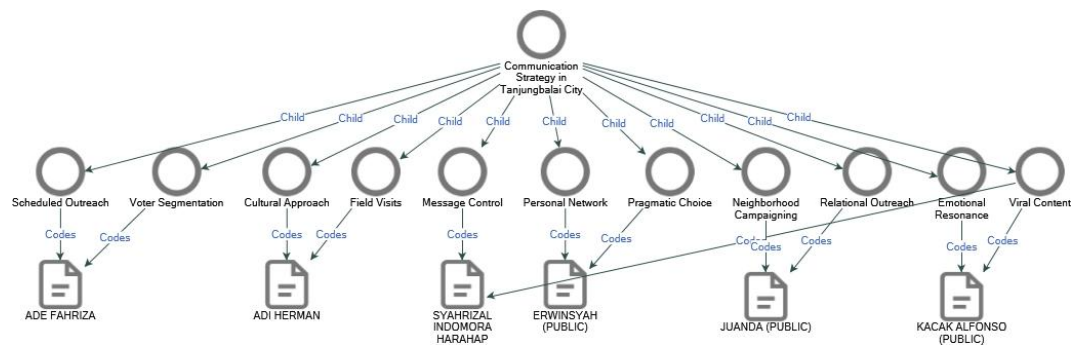


Figure 1. Map of Interview Results in Tanjungbalai City (Source: NVivo 15, 2026)

The winning campaign model in Tanjung Balai City, as shown on the map of interview results, reflects a communication architecture that operates as a system rather than a stand-alone series of activities. The framework connects scheduled outreach, voter segmentation, cultural approaches, field visits, message control, personal networking, pragmatic choices, environment-based campaigns, relational outreach, emotional resonance, to viral content circulating in the digital space. This structure places victory as a product of cross-channel coordination that closes the gaps, as the candidate's message is produced, disseminated, tested for response, and then re-amplified through social networks and media that work simultaneously at the city level.

Scheduled outreach comes across as a foundation that ensures campaigns move in an orderly and repetitive manner at the same social points, so that candidate attendance is not incidental. Ade Fahriza emphasized, "Campaign communication is designed through the initial mobilization of the party structure to the environmental level and ongoing outreach activities before the formal campaign period begins." Ade Fahriza said, "The team segmented voters, including women and youth groups, and then adjusted engagement activities according to those segments." Ade Fahriza explained, "Media opinion teams and journalists are also involved to strengthen the candidate's public image and maintain narrative consistency" (Hellzén et al., 2022).

The competitive communication model in the context of multi-candidate in Tanjung Balai can be seen from the emphasis on differentiation of incumbents and framing change as the main differentiator. Ade Fahriza stated, "In the context of multi-candidates, campaign communication highlights the strength of the coalition and emphasizes political change as a key differentiator from the incumbent." Adi Herman emphasized, "The campaign model relies heavily on culturally embedded communication through direct engagement with the community, repeated environmental visits, and face-to-face delivery of visions and programs." Competitive framing that emphasizes performance comparisons and change narratives shows how campaigns structure public judgments of candidates and opponents (Siebert et al., 2022).

Social media operations on the interview map show the professionalization of digital message production and prudence in maintaining image stability. Syahrizal Indomora Harahap emphasized, "Campaign communication is centered on coordinated social media operations on TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram, supported by a dedicated production team." The content selection process is also explicitly mentioned through a statement, "Content selection follows an internal review process to prevent reputational risks and maximize engagement potential." Syahrizal explained,

"Digital communication focuses on local issues such as floods, waste management, and fiscal issues, which results in higher online interactions" (Gulyas & Hess, 2024).

The viral content in the interview map shows how digital culture can shift the dynamics of competition through emotional resonance that is difficult to match with formal messages. Kacak Alfonso emphasized, "Campaign communication in Tanjung Balai was greatly influenced by the viral spread of a protest song criticizing local governance, then it became a common reference, especially among young voters." Erwinsyah emphasized, "The dynamics of the campaign in Tanjung Balai are greatly influenced by pragmatic considerations and personal ties, so that the decision to vote often involves social relations, family connections, and practical incentives." Juanda reinforces the relational dimension by stating, "Campaign communication involves strong relational outreach through neighborhood visits, community discussions, and local campaign coordination, while small-scale practical assistance is perceived by citizens as part of the campaign effort."

Asahan Regency places the winning campaign model as a political communication practice that moves within the structure of a single-candidate competition facing empty columns. This configuration shifts the center of victory from a battle of differentiation between candidates to legitimacy work that demands public justification of the meaning of the election, strengthening voter participation, and managing citizens' perception of blank columns as a formal rejection channel. The main risk lies not in the opponent's attack on the candidate, but rather in political apathy, declining voter turnout, and the formation of a discourse that elections are only a formality (Gommeh et al., 2021).

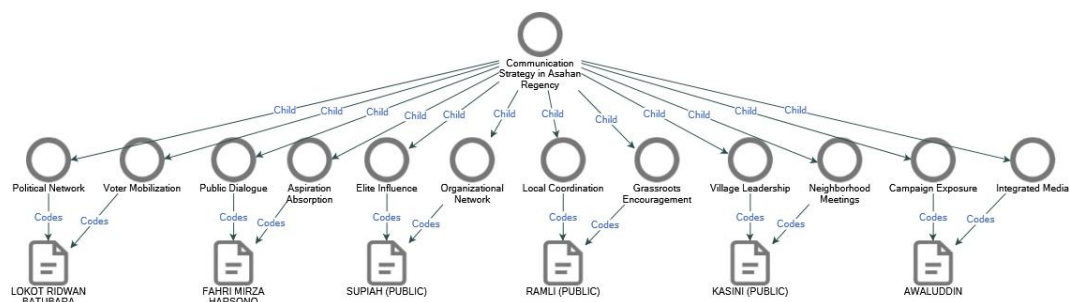


Figure 2. Map of Interview Results in Asahan Regency (Source: NVivo 15, 2026)

The map of the results of the communication model interviews in Asahan Regency shows a winning configuration that relies on legitimacy work, voter mobilization, and strengthening socio-political networks at the local level. The single-candidate contestation structure of dealing with empty columns forms a different communication logic than the battle between candidates, as the center of strategy moves on maintaining participation and ensuring the electoral mandate is perceived as legitimate by the public. This framework makes each node on the map function as part of a single system that connects political networks, organizational coordination, village leadership, neighborhood meetings, and complementary media utilization (Harmawati et al., 2024).

Lokot Ridwan Batubara stated, "The winning campaign model is built through layered communication, starting from the formation of a structured political network from the sub-district level to the polling station, so that the visibility of candidates and the penetration of messages really works." Fahri Mirza Harsono emphasized, "We do not just come to deliver programs, but open a

dialogue room, listen to residents' complaints, and then use it as material to compile a message that makes more sense for them." Fahri stated, "If residents feel heard, they are more willing to vote, because they think that this election still has meaning."

The dimension of elite influence on the map indicates that local social structures still play a major role in authoritative figures who can influence citizens' decisions. Supiah emphasized, "The influence of the figure is real, because the people here still see who they trust, and then they follow his direction." Kasini emphasized, "The village head, RT, RW is the one who knows the condition of the community best, so if they invite them, the impact is immediately felt." This statement shows that community functions as a reinforcer of participation norms, so that mobilization is not only individual, but also collective through subtle social pressure (Harmawati et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2024).

The organizational network dimension on the map confirms that winning requires an internal structure that can divide tasks, regulate the rhythm of activities, and maintain message discipline. Ramli emphasized, "We work using a clear organizational network, there is a coordinator, there is a regional division, there is a reporting mechanism, so the message conveyed is one voice." The integrated media dimension on the map shows that campaigns are not only moving in a face-to-face space, but blending communication channels to expand the reach of participation messages. Awaluddin stated, "We combine field communication with the media, so the activities below are raised again so that the message of participation and legitimacy reaches more people."

The winning orientation forms a different communication architecture between Tanjung Balai and Asahan, so that the strategic pressure points are impossible to standardize even though the communication devices used look similar. The multi-candidate structure in Tanjung Balai encourages message differentiation and counternarrative management. In contrast, the single-candidate structure in Asahan encourages legitimacy and participation strengthening as the most decisive indicators of success (Dong, 2025). Tanjung Balai placed changing perceptions and shifts in support as the main outcomes of the tight competition. In contrast, Asahan placed meaningful participation and social acceptance of outcomes as the most decisive outcomes.

The legitimacy-participatory model in Asahan Regency can be read as an effort to convey a message that encourages people to continue to use their voting rights in the absence of competing candidates. The framing-disruption model in Tanjung Balai City works through program differentiation, image strengthening, issue management, and the use of various communication channels to reach different segments of voters.

Differences in the Campaign Model of the Candidate Pair for Regional Head of Asahan Regency and Tanjungbalai City

The campaign communication model in this section is positioned as a framework that explains how the winning campaign model translates into message design, channel selection, actor structuring, and measurement of the effect of communication at the voter level. The context of the multi-candidate Tanjung Balai City Election demands a competitive and adaptive communication model, because campaigns work in a narrative arena that collides with each other, the rhythm of issues that quickly change, and the public that receives many communication stimuli in proximity. The model framework in these findings views campaigns as a system that connects the planning of desired effects, goal mapping, message production, media selection, and continuous feedback, so

that changes in voter preferences can be understood as a result of the interaction between communication design and social responses that develop in urban spaces (Premathilake & Li, 2024).

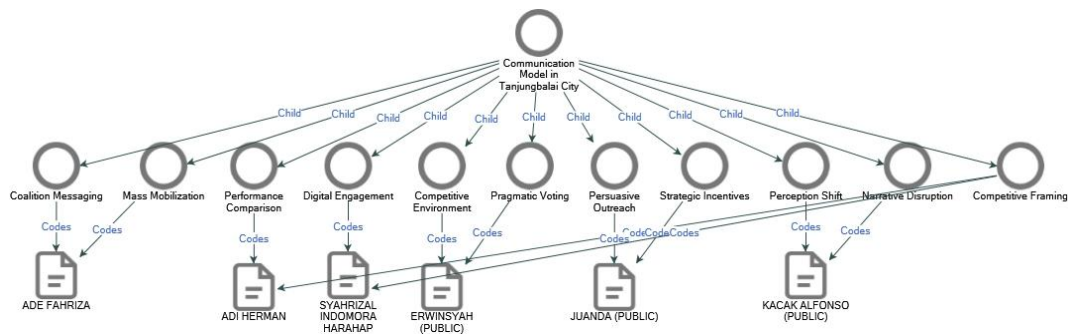


Figure 3. Map of Interview Results in Tanjungbalai City (Source: NVivo 15, 2026)

The campaign communication model in Tanjung Balai City on the map shows that victory is built through a series of communication that moves from the production of the core narrative to the management of the impact of public perception that continues to change. The multi-candidate structure creates a dense message competition field, so that the communication model is not enough to be understood as a one-way flow from candidate to voter, but as a system that combines coalition messages, mass mobilization, performance comparison, digital engagement, pragmatic calculations, and narrative disruption that can emerge from informal spaces.

The dimension of coalition messaging on the map shows that coalition strength is used as a marker of political legitimacy as well as an instrument of differentiation against incumbents. Ade Fahriza explained, "Campaign communication highlights the strength of the coalition and emphasizes political change as the main differentiator from the incumbent." The performance comparison dimension on the map shows how campaigns produce public ratings through performance contrast. Adi Herman emphasized, "Campaign communication emphasizes differentiation through performance comparison and narrative of change."

The competitive framing dimension of the map reinforces that performance comparisons work alongside the change frame to create a symbolic opposition that is easy for voters to understand. Adi Herman stated, "The message highlights the weaknesses perceived by the public in the governance of the incumbent, while positioning the challenger as a party capable of bringing improvements." The relationship between competitive framing and performance comparison confirms that contrast strategies guide the campaign communication model, because differentiation is key when voters receive various messages from several candidates in close proximity.

The digital engagement dimension on the map places the digital space as the main arena for message reinforcement, not just an additional channel. Syahrizal Indomora Harahap emphasized, "Campaign communication is centered on coordinated social media operations on TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram, supported by a dedicated production team." This information shows that the campaign communication model moves as a system of content production, cross-platform distribution, and response monitoring, so that digital communication becomes an engine that accelerates reach while tightening the competition for perceptions (Kebede et al., 2022). Syahrizal stated, "The selection of content follows an internal review process to prevent reputational risks and maximize potential engagement."

The persuasive outreach dimension of the map shows that the campaign still needs relational work to turn impressions into real choices. Juanda emphasized, "Campaign communication involves strong relational outreach through neighborhood visits, community discussions, and local campaign coordination." The pragmatic dimension of voting on the map shows that voting decisions are often determined by calculations produced by social networks, not just by policy arguments. Erwinsyah described, "Voting decisions often involve social relationships, family connections, and practical incentives, reflecting a political culture that works through interpersonal influence, not mere programmatic messages."

The perception shift dimension on the map shows how perception shifts can arise from channels that are not fully controlled by the campaign team. Kacak Alfonso explained, "Campaign communication in Tanjung Balai was greatly influenced by the viral spread of a protest song criticizing local governance, then it became a common reference, especially among young voters." The narrative disruption dimension on the map confirms that viral content can disrupt the stability of the incumbent's image and force strategy adjustments. Handsome Alfonso added, "The viral song helped shift voter perceptions by reinforcing dissatisfaction with the incumbent and amplifying criticism in a memorable form."

The overall communication model map of the Tanjung Balai campaign shows that victory is formed through the integration of three interlocking layers: a competitive narrative layer through coalition messaging, performance comparison, and competitive framing; a relational layer through persuasive outreach, strategic incentives, and pragmatic voting; and a perception acceleration layer through digital engagement, perception shift, and narrative disruption. This structure explains that campaigns move as an adaptive system that continuously produces messages, examines responses, and then amplifies the most effective channels in situations of intense competition.

The change in the structure of the competition became relevant when the analysis shifted to Asahan Regency, which presented a contestation of a single candidate facing an empty column. This configuration shifts the orientation of the communication model from the struggle for support between candidates to the maintenance of legitimacy through strengthening voter participation and strengthening the meaning of elections. The main risk lies not in the counternarrative of the candidate, but rather in apathy, the diminished urgency of voting, and the growing perception that elections are just formalities that do not need to be followed

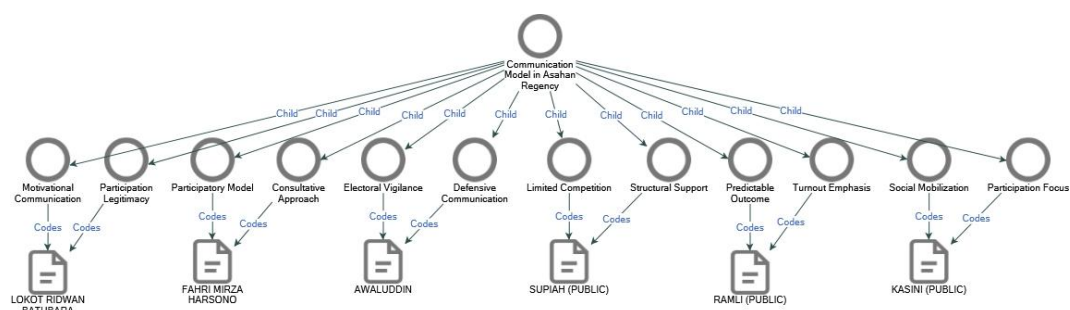


Figure 4. Map of Interview Results in Asahan Regency (Source: NVivo 15, 2026)

The change in the structure of the competition became relevant when the analysis shifted to Asahan Regency, which presented a contestation of a single candidate facing an empty column. This configuration shifts the orientation of the communication model from the struggle for support between candidates to the maintenance of legitimacy through strengthening voter participation and strengthening the meaning of elections. The main risk lies not in the counternarrative of the candidate's opponents, but rather in apathy, decreased urgency of voting, and the growing perception that elections are just formalities that do not need to be followed.

The motivational communication dimension on the map shows that campaign communication in Asahan starts with producing psychological motivation so that residents feel they have a reason to vote. Lokot Ridwan Batubara emphasized, "If the context is a single candidate, the hardest thing is to motivate residents to come, because many feel that the results are predictable." The motivation in this model is directly related to participation legitimacy, which is an important node, because legitimacy is produced through involvement, not just through the victory of votes over empty columns. Fahri Mirza Harsono emphasized, "Legitimacy is only felt if the community is involved, so our communication focuses on making residents feel that this election is still important."

The participatory dimension of the model on the map shows that campaign communication seeks to create a format that engages citizens, rather than simply conveying a one-way message. Fahri stated, "We don't just deliver programs, we invite people to talk, so that they feel part of the process, not just the audience." The consultative approach dimension strengthens participatory logic by placing consultation as a mechanism for gathering aspirations and formulating relevant messages (Uotila et al., 2024). Fahri emphasized, "We heard the complaints of the residents first, then we compiled the way of speaking and the campaign materials, so that it would not seem patronizing."

The defensive communication dimension on the map shows that campaigns need to respond to public skepticism that can arise in the form of cynicism or an attitude of underestimating elections. Supiah emphasized, "There are residents who say what to vote for, so we have to continue to explain that voting is not about the opponent, but about mandate and responsibility." The dimension of limited competition on the map indicates that limited competition is the structural condition that shapes all communication models in Asahan (Barrero et al., 2023).

The turnout emphasis dimension on the map shows that the focus of communication is directed at increasing voter attendance as an indicator of legitimacy. Kasini emphasized, "The most emphasized thing is attendance, we continue to remind residents to come, because if the participation is low, people will think that this election is not serious." The social mobilization dimension on the map shows that voter attendance is built through social mechanisms that are close to the community. Kasini stated, "The village head, RT, RW, and environmental leaders are the most effective to invite, because the residents hear them every day." Kasini added, "If the residents participate, the results are more acceptable, so our focus is indeed participation, not just winning points."

The overall communication model of the Asahan campaign shows that victory is built through the integration of three main layers, strengthening the meaning and motivation of participation, managing the risk of apathy through defensive communication and message consistency, and operating strategies through structural support, process supervision, and social mobilization at the village and environmental levels. This structure explains why campaigns in the context of a single candidate move more legitimately than competitively, since the end goal is social acceptance of outcomes that are supported by meaningful participation.

The campaign communication model in the two regions moves from different contestation contexts, so the core components of the model are also oriented differently. The Tanjung Balai model relies on narrative competition, while the Asahan model relies on participatory legitimacy. Competitive framing and performance comparison in Tanjung Balai work as a differentiation mechanism, while turnout emphasis and participation legitimacy in Asahan work as a mechanism of meaning.

Digital engagement in Tanjung Balai is an acceleration engine because the diffusion of content and engagement expands the reach of messages while accelerating the shift in perception. Integrated media in Asahan reinforces fieldwork, maintains public attention to the urgency of the election, and ensures that the message of participation does not sink into social routines. Tanjung Balai places message control as reputation protection in the fast-paced digital space, while Asahan places electoral vigilance as a protection against the delegitimization of the process.

The integrity of this tabulation confirms that the campaign communication model cannot be separated from the contestation structure and ecology of local communication. Tanjung Balai needs a competitive-adaptive model because the arena of discourse is changing rapidly and narrative disruption has the potential to shift perceptions. Asahan requires a legitimative-participatory model because the main challenge lies in the decrease in the urgency of voting and the need to build social acceptance through turnout and meaningful participation.

Opportunities and Communication Obstacles for Candidates for Regional Heads of Asahan Regency and Tanjungbalai City

The opportunity and communication obstacles section in the Tanjung Balai City Election is positioned to read the conditions that strengthen or limit the effectiveness of campaign work in the multi-candidate contestation structure. The dense competition of messages makes communication not only judged by how often the message is delivered, but also by how precisely the message is framed, how quickly it is disseminated, and how strongly it is accepted in the social conversation of citizens.

The main opportunity in the multi-candidate context arises from the opening of differentiation space for incumbents, especially when the public has direct experience with governance issues that are considered problematic. This opportunity makes the change narrative work as a framing anchor that leads the public to judge the candidate through the symbolic opposition between the perceived conditions and the agenda of improvement offered. The strength of these opportunities lies in their ability to turn everyday issues into political evaluation material that can be reshared through urban social networks (Haas et al., 2021).

Communication opportunities are also open through digital channels that can expand the reach of messages beyond face-to-face audiences. Coordinated social media operations allow campaign content to be produced in a format that conforms to the platform's logic, allowing messages to circulate quickly, build engagement, and thicken candidate visibility. Indirect opportunities also arise from the disruption of narratives that work through popular culture and viral content, especially when such content locks in public emotions and places criticism in an easily repeatable format.

Adi Herman emphasized, "The narrative of change is the strongest entrance because residents compare what they feel with what is promised." Adi Herman stated, "Criticism of the incumbent is effective if it is based on performance, not just attacking the person, because residents have experience directly assessing." Performance-based criticism strengthens the legitimacy of change,



as the public can verify the campaign narrative through the service and governance experiences they face (Primayanti & Puspita, 2022).

Handsome Alfonso emphasized, "Symbolic criticism gets stuck faster, especially if it's wrapped in a cultural form that is easy to repeat." Handsome Alfonso stated, "The impact is not only that people know, but people feel it, so their emotions move along, and then it affects the way they judge." Psychological impact is at the heart of changing perceptions, as voters often decide not only because of data, but because of feelings that are repeated and reinforced by social conversations (Casero-Ripollés, 2021).

The main obstacle to multi-candidate contexts arises from message noise, as the public receives many communication stimuli from multiple candidate pairs in proximity. This noise demands disciplined message control so the candidate's narrative is not divided, because narrative fragmentation weakens differentiation and gives the opponent room to take advantage of desynchronization. Another obstacle is structural when the incumbent has certain advantages that affect public visibility, access, and perception of government capacity (Carotenuto et al., 2023).

The next obstacle arises from reputational risk in the digital space, as content can be misinterpreted, twisted, or counterattacked quickly. Syahrizal stated, "On social media, negative comments spread very quickly, so content must be prepared so that it is not easily twisted." Erwinsyah added, "There is strong social loyalty, people follow family, join groups, follow figures, so it is not easy to be shifted just by advertising." Social loyalty becomes an obstacle because it makes changing preferences more difficult, but it becomes an opportunity when campaigns can penetrate those networks through consistent relational outreach (Ali et al., 2021).

The overall map of opportunities and obstacles at Tanjung Balai confirms that campaign communication moves on three interlocking layers: the layer of local context that determines acceptance, the layer of issue discourse that shapes the assessment, and the psychological layer that accelerates the shift in perception. Effective campaign work leverages opportunities on change narratives, public issues, sympathy, and viral momentum, while managing barriers in the form of social loyalty, negative comments, and ethical sensitivity (Musi et al., 2024).

Changes in the contest context became important when the analysis was shifted to Asahan Regency, which presented a single candidate facing a blank column. The shift in the structure of the competition changed the center of communication pressure from grabbing attention and disrupting narratives to issues of legitimacy and participation. The main risk is no longer the noise of messages between candidates. However, the predictability of the results lowers voter urgency, triggers apathy, and opens up the space for cynicism about the meaning of the election.

Communication opportunities in Asahan tend to rely on consolidating the structure and strength of village networks as a driving force for participation. The most decisive line of communication is no longer dominant in virality, but in the repetition of the invitation to vote through environmental meetings, local leadership, and social mobilization that is close to the daily lives of citizens. Strengthening the message of participation is a key strategy because the success of the campaign is measured by voter involvement as a buffer of legitimacy.

The administrative continuity dimension on the map shows the opportunities that come from administrative sustainability and the stability of the governance structure, because the public can read the continuity of services as a reason to stay involved. Kasini emphasized, "Many citizens see sustainability as important, so our communication links elections to the continuation of service, not

just who wins." Awaluddin emphasized, "We encourage residents to see this election as related to the continuation of development, so they have a rational reason to vote."

Administrative continuity is met with reduced excitement, which appears as an obstacle, marking a decline in political enthusiasm when the contestation does not present a rival candidate. Fahri Mirza Harsono emphasized, "The atmosphere of the election was not as usual, because residents felt that there was no match, so the excitement decreased." Fahri stated, "If the enthusiasm is low, the invitation to vote will not be automatic, it must be repeated continuously through meetings and local figures."

Development narrative opportunities confront media limitations as obstacles, marking the limitations of the reach and effectiveness of certain media channels in the local context. Awaluddin stated, "In some areas, the limitations of the media are real, so you can't just rely on information through the media, you have to go down directly." The limited media shows that communication opportunities in Asahan are more determined by fieldwork and community networks.

The limitations of the media are related to the inevitability perception that emerges as a psychological obstacle, namely the perception that the election results are certain (Z. Cheng et al., 2024). Supiah emphasized, "Many feel that the result is certain, so they ask why it came." Supiah stated, "If there is a definite assumption, enthusiasm decreases, and it makes communication work harder."

The infrastructure issue dimension on the map indicates infrastructure issues that can limit mobility and reduce participation, especially when access to certain locations is difficult. Lokot Ridwan Batubara emphasized, "There are areas where access is not easy, so infrastructure problems have a direct effect on the presence of residents." The risk of apathy is the most strategic barrier because it is a combined output of outcome predictability, low enthusiasm, media limitations, and mobility barriers (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2025).

The contestation of a single candidate in Asahan Regency does not eliminate the existence of political opposition. However, it shifts its form from competition between candidates to electoral resistance that is formal, informal, and latent. Empty boxes are a constitutional channel for people who do not give consent to a single candidate pair. The interview data of this study have not shown the existence of an empty box movement or a solidly organized consolidation of the opposition. Empirical findings more clearly show the perception that a single candidate will win, a decrease in motivation to come to the polling station, and the emergence of apathy due to the loss of open competition.

The overall map of Asahan's communication opportunities and barriers confirms that the campaign operates on three interlocking layers, the psychological layer in the form of predictability of results, low enthusiasm, and the risk of apathy, the structural layer in the form of media limitations, bureaucratic track record, and development continuity, and the practical layer in the form of access and external conditions that affect citizen mobility (Karafil & Ulaş, 2023). The greatest opportunities lie in the narrative of continuity and the strengthening of the reasons for participation. In contrast, the greatest obstacles lie in the perception of the inevitability of results and apathy exacerbated by barriers to access.

Communication opportunities and barriers in the two regions are formed from different contestation structures. Tanjung Balai displays dominant opportunities on viral momentum and public issues that are easy to refer to, while Asahan displays dominant opportunities on the narrative of sustainable development and services to build reasons for participation. The barrier center in

Tanjung Balai is in the form of message noise, negative comments, and social loyalty that locks in. In contrast, the obstacle center in Asahan is apathy, low enthusiasm, and the perception of definite results.

The connection between Tanjung Balai and Asahan's findings in this section is maintained through one common thread, namely that campaign communication is always moving as a system that changes context into strategy design. The multi-candidate context gives birth to momentum-based opportunities and disruptions, while the single-candidate context gives birth to opportunities based on consolidation and the meaning of participation.

DISCUSSION

Integration of research findings with previous research

The findings present the winning campaign model as a communication system designed, implemented, and evaluated through the integration of campaigns, witness networks, organizational work, and media utilization, so that victory is understood as the output of the orchestration of messages, actors, channels, and field disciplines. This systemic framework opens up a strong space for integration with previous research because the cutting-edge literature also moves on the logic that electoral communication works as an ecology, i.e., the production of messages, the distribution of information, and the management of public perception. However, the context varies from national to local. This point brings together the dissertation with the findings of Adamczewska (2024) about the flow of political information on social media which tends to be circular and dominated by elites, while the ideal of interactive campaigns is often symbolic.

Moreno-Díaz (2025) and Tirado-García (2021) show that message consistency, upload rhythm, and text-visual interaction strengthen persuasiveness in digital platforms, while dissertations show that consistency is not only maintained on social media, but also maintained across channels through message control, volunteer work, and narrative reinforcement in face-to-face spaces. This pattern places digital as a multiplier, while organizational discipline and community relations are positioned as locking mechanisms.

Soares (2024) places memes and humor as propagation strategies that expand reach and reduce resistance, while his dissertation shows that the virality of the protest song in Tanjung Balai works as a narrative disruption that triggers a perception shift. Kujawa (2022) shows that irony is used as a rhetorical strategy to weaken opponents and strengthen emotional appeal, while dissertations show symbolic criticism and narratives of change working to build differentiators against the incumbent without always relying on formal rhetorical techniques of speech. Ekman (2024) shows that the party uses its own produced news to control messages outside the mainstream media. The dissertation shows message control not only through the ownership of media channels, but also through internal procedures that maintain narrative consistency, content selection, and coordination of the digital production team.

Sandes (2025) emphasized that visual personalization and intimate narratives can increase loyalty, while Mani (2025) points out that live streaming and personal branding increase Gen Z participation through proximity and direct engagement. The findings of the dissertation strengthen the function of proximity. However, proximity is positioned not as the final goal, but as a node of sympathy which is then converted through relational outreach, environmental visits, and field organization work. Gearhart (2024) found that the perception of common ethnic identity influences political involvement, while the dissertation places social loyalty and personal network as social



mechanisms that strengthen voting decisions. Idogho (2025) shows that adaptive communication models and message consistency strengthen leadership image, while dissertations show that adaptation is manifested in a combination of large-scale public events, local engagement, and the reinforcement of selectively selected digital content.

The intra-national difference became sharper when the analysis shifted from Tanjung Balai, which had multi-candidate contests, to Asahan, where there was a single candidate against an empty column. This competition structure transforms the center of strategy from message differentiation to legitimacy work and increased turnout. Anom et al. (2024) emphasized the digital communication model as a key factor for success in the 2024 Presidential Election through personalization and interactivity, while the dissertation showed that in Asahan, the dominant communication model was motivational communication, consultative dialogue, village-based social mobilization, and process supervision up to the polling station.

Łukasik-Turecka (2024) shows that professional figures such as medical experts increase the credibility of candidates in the context of the pandemic, while dissertations show local figures such as village heads, RT/RW, and community networks to become credibility mediators that facilitate invitations to vote. Pohan (2025) emphasizes a consistent and visionary communication style to build leadership stability, while the dissertation shows consistency in the context of local elections working in a more operational form, namely the consistency of the invitation to participation, the consistency of the narrative of the continuation of development, and the consistency of structural coordination up to the TPS level.

The integrity of this comparative reading confirms that the results of the dissertation unite two major currents of previous research, the current that emphasizes the dynamics of digital discourse and the current that emphasizes the social structure and organization of the field. The context of Tanjung Balai shows that winning opportunities arise from public issues, narrative disruptions, and digital acceleration that are then locked by relational work. At the same time, the main obstacles stem from social loyalty and reputational risk. The context of Asahan shows that the chances of winning arise from the narrative of continuity and community mobilization, which are then locked by the order of the process. At the same time, the main obstacles stem from predictability of results, low enthusiasm, and apathy that are exacerbated by barriers to access.

The integration of findings with previous research is not only the activity of matching research results, but the process of assessing the quality of arguments, finding suitability, explaining differences, and expanding academic understanding. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī views the ability to hear various views and follow the best as the character of *ulul albāb*, that is, an individual who uses reason to distinguish the truth, benefits, and weaknesses of an opinion. Tafsir Jalalain explains that following the best words is related to accepting the most correct and most instructive views (Al-Razi, 2012; As-Suyuthi & Al-Mahally, 2015).

Integration of Research Findings with Nowak and Warneryd's Campaign Model

The findings show that the Pilkada campaign is a communication system that works through the integration of messages, actors, channels, organizations, and feedback, so that victory is not understood as a separate series of activities, but as a design that gradually produces support and legitimacy. The framework can be interpreted as integrated with Nowak and Warneryd's campaign model, which places campaigns as a strategic process from goal setting, strategy formulation, messaging and channel structuring, resource organization, to continuous evaluation and adjustment.



The emphasis on the relationship of objectives and instruments allows the dissertation findings on differences in competition structures, the multi-candidate Tanjung Balai and the single-candidate Asahan against the blank columns, translated as differences in objectives and the operational logic of the campaign within the same framework.

The objectives of the Tanjung Balai campaign are oriented towards differentiation and shifting perceptions in the fierce competition. In contrast, the objectives of the Asahan campaign are oriented towards participatory legitimacy through increasing voter attendance and social acceptance of results. This clarity of purpose explains why the dominant components in each region differ without denying the similarity that the two still function as campaign systems (H. C. Chen et al., 2025; Schwab et al., 2024). Tanjung Balai's findings show that challengers' positioning is built through the narrative of change and performance comparison as a differentiator, so the strategy shifts to framing work that focuses public assessment on governance evaluation. Asahan's findings show a strategy moving on to motivational and defensive communication that affirms the mandate, responsibility, and meaning of the presence of voting as the basis for legitimacy.

Tanjung Balai's findings feature segmentation of women and youth, as well as mapping environmental nodes that determine the direction of activities, so that messages and forms of engagement are tailored to the character of the audience. Segmentation decisions in Asahan move through the mapping of village communities and environmental structures that are most effective in driving participation. The findings show the role of village heads, RT/RW, and environmental leaders as liaisons who translate the message of participation into community norms. Tanjung Balai's findings show that the narrative of change is maintained as an anchor, then strengthened through criticism based on public issues so that the differentiator against the incumbent remains credible. The message design in Asahan presents participation as a core that continues to be repeated in various forms, ranging from public dialogue and aspiration consultation to strengthening mandate symbols (Ofori & Lockee, 2021; Sudarma et al., 2022).

Tanjung Balai's findings place coordinated social media operations as an engine for accelerating diffusion, while field activities are a source of events that can be elevated into content. The selection of channels in Asahan shows a greater reliance on face-to-face and community forums due to limited media coverage and the need to repeat participatory messages. Tanjung Balai's findings show a division of roles among the content production team, the field team, and the relational network, so that message work and mobilization work run simultaneously (Draganidis et al., 2024). The organizational components in Asahan emphasize territorial structural support, regional division, reporting mechanisms, and local coordination that adjusts the approach to the environment. The findings also place electoral vigilance as part of the system, so that legitimacy is sought not only through invitation, but also through public confidence in the orderliness of the process (Rožman & Štrukelj, 2021).

Tanjung Balai's findings feature an orchestration of activity scale: large events for visibility and small engagements for proximity, so the campaign's rhythm maintains public attention while locking in micro-support. Scheduling in Asahan relies on repeated messages through neighborhood meetings and networks of local figures to contain the decline in enthusiasm. Tanjung Balai's findings show the need to read public conversations, manage negative comments, and adjust content based on potential reputational risks and engagement opportunities (Dongyan et al., 2022; Qi, 2023). Feedback on Asahan appears as a reading of symptoms of apathy, low enthusiasm, barriers

to access, and limited media, so that strategy adjustments tend to move towards strengthening social mobilization and choosing channels that are closer to the community.

Tanjung Balai's findings show that public issues such as floods and garbage serve as a source of legitimacy for the narrative of change, so that the issue becomes an opportunity to strengthen competitive framing. Asahan's findings show that infrastructure issues and external conditions are more often obstacles that increase the cost of voting, so that the issue demands a practical response that strengthens mobilization work. Tanjung Balai's findings place legitimacy on the ability to position candidates as credible alternatives through framing issues and strengthening public perception. Asahan's findings place legitimacy on the participation and order of the process, so that the mandate is perceived as valid when citizens present to vote and believe that the process is running smoothly. This integration pattern shows that the Nowak and Warneryd models can explain the differences in winning mechanisms as variations in the same campaign framework, namely the goal of determining strategy, strategy determining segmentation, segmentation determining the message, message determining the channel, the channel demanding the organization, the organization setting the rhythm, the rhythm of generating responses, the response becoming feedback (Shangguan & Zha, 2025; Q. Zhang, 2025).

The comparative synthesis born from the integration confirms two configurations of campaign models that are equally consistent with Nowak and Warneryd: the competitive-adaptive configuration in Tanjung Balai and the legitimacy-participatory configuration in Asahan. Competitive-adaptive configurations demand discourse speed, disruption management, and support locking over relational networks. The legitimacy-participatory configuration requires the meaning of participation, the repetition of invitations to the community node, and the strengthening of process integrity as a support for social acceptance. This structure is close to the principle of communication in Surah Ibrāhīm verse 4, which explains that each messenger was sent using the language of his people so that the message could be explained clearly. Al-Zamakhsharī explained that the use of tribal language is a condition for understanding the message because explanations will not work when the recipient does not understand the system of meaning used by the communicator. Hamka also emphasized that language is not only a word structure, but a way to bring messages closer to the nature of the mind and life of the community (Al-Zamakhshari, 1995; Hamka, 2012).

Integration of Research Findings with Theory of Winning Campaign Models and Political Communication

Dissertation findings place winning as the output of a planned, coordinated, and measurable political communication system through the orchestration of messages, actors, channels, and disciplines of field organization, so that victory is not understood as a spontaneous effect of the candidate's popularity alone. This framework can be integrated with the theory of the winning campaign model that emphasizes the determination of electoral goals, resource mapping, determination of target segments, mastery of the issue agenda, and the securing of votes in the final stage, as well as with political communication theory that focuses on the production of meaning, legitimacy, and the formation of public consent (B. Cheng, 2024; Lai & Fortwengel, 2025).

The different competition structures between Tanjung Balai City and Asahan Regency provide the most obvious integration footing because the theory of the winning campaign model always assumes that the configuration of the contest determines the logic of the action. The multi-

candidate contestation in Tanjung Balai requires a strategy of differentiation and swing voter competition. In contrast, the contestation of a single candidate facing an empty column in Asahan demands a strategy of legitimacy and strengthening participation. This difference shows that the winning campaign model moves not only on "winning over opponents", but on "generating revenue" that corresponds to the type of competition.

The mapping of the competition field as the first step in the theory of the winning campaign model can be seen in Tanjung Balai's findings on competitive framing and performance comparison as a communication umbrella. Competitive framing puts candidates in a relevant alternative position, whereas performance comparisons provide credible argumentative material to direct public judgments. The findings of the dissertation show that local issues such as floods, garbage, and fiscal problems are not just used as topics, but as anchors for the narrative of change to assess incumbents and challengers. This integration emphasizes that the winning campaign model requires a public issue-based setting agenda that has resonance, while political communication explains how that resonance is built through repetition, symbols, and references to citizens' experiences (Berestova et al., 2022; Cosby et al., 2025).

The need for winning campaign models to break through the information noise in multi-candidate contests is seen in findings on message control, internal content review, and cross-channel narrative consistency. Communication channels as a winning instrument in the theory of the winning campaign model can be read through the findings of coordinated social media operations in Tanjung Balai combined with fieldwork. Strengthening digital engagement expands reach and accelerates diffusion, while neighborhood visits and community discussions turn impressions into social commitments. This integration confirms that an effective winning campaign model requires hybrid campaigns, while political communication explains that attitude changes often require relational strengthening beyond media exposure (Hermawan, 2025).

The relational work connects the winning campaign model with the theory of political communication about credibility and trust as persuasion capital. Findings on persuasive outreach and sympathy building suggest that emotional closeness and a sense of "no distance" broaden acceptance, especially among still fluid voters. The presence of viral momentum and narrative disruption in Tanjung Balai shows that the winning campaign model also deals with external factors that can suddenly shift the arena of competition (Stevani & Patricia Robin, 2023). This integration confirms that winning in a competitive context requires the ability to manage a fast-moving public agenda without losing the consistency of the candidate's meaning.

The switch to Asahan shows how the winning campaign model can work in contests that seem "easy" but actually carry the risk of delegitimization. The dissertation findings showed that the predictability of the results reduced excitement, triggered an inevitability perception, and increased apathy risk, so that the goal of winning shifted from seizing support to mobilizing participation. This integration confirms that the winning campaign model on a single candidate still requires planning, as winning numbers without participation risks weakening social acceptance (Gier-Reinartz & Harms, 2024; van der Wilt, 2024).

Motivational and defensive communication in Asahan emphasizes the function of political communication as the production of legitimacy and the meaning of the act of choice. The participatory and consultative approach that stands out in Asahan shows the dimension of political communication that is oriented towards dialogue and recognition of aspirations. The dissertation findings show that public dialogue and aspirational absorption are used to reduce symbolic distance

and foster a sense of belonging. Village-based social mobilization and local leadership in Asahan show that the winning campaign model relies on networks that can repeat messages and shape norms of participation (Cristache et al., 2025; Menegatto et al., 2025).

Structural support, regional division, reporting mechanisms, and local coordination in Asahan show the character of the winning campaign model as the work of a territorial organization. The dimension of electoral vigilance and witness networks connects the winning campaign model with the winning theory of vote security and process security. Integration with political communication confirms that the order of the process is part of the production of trust, so that witnesses and supervision are not just technical, but a symbol of integrity that affects the social acceptance of results.

The comparison of Tanjung Balai and Asahan confirms the theoretical principle of the winning campaign model that the suitability of the strategy with the structure of the competition and the character of the voters determines victory. Tanjung Balai demands a strategy of differentiation, mastery of discourse, and reputation risk management, while Asahan demands a strategy of mobilizing participation, meaning of mandates, and strengthening process integrity. The integrity of the dissertation findings also strengthens the idea that political communication is formed through a combination of arguments, emotions, symbols, and social networks (Vaccari, 2022; Wang et al., 2022).

This integrative synthesis shows that the theory of the winning campaign model provides a framework for decisions, objectives, segmentation, messages, channels, organization, and security. In contrast, the theory of political communication explains the mechanisms of meaning, legitimacy, trust, and discourse that make strategic decisions effective. The dissertation findings combine the two through evidence that a successful winning campaign model always takes the form of a communication system that transforms context into action design.

The winning campaign model and political communication place messages as an instrument of image formation, public relations, trust, and support. The use of such messages requires ethical boundaries so that persuasive skills do not turn into manipulation. Surah Al-Aḥzāb verse 70 commands believers to convey qawlan ṣadīdan, which are true, straight, and appropriate words. Hamka interprets qawlan ṣadīdan as a speech that does not deviate from the truth and is not formed to deceive others. Quraish Shihab explains that ṣadīd words are not only true in substance, but also on target, constructive, and producing improvements (Hamka, 2012; Shihab, 2015).

Campaigns in Asahan Regency must ensure that the invitation to vote for a single candidate does not turn into political pressure or denial of the public's right to vote for a blank column. Campaigns in Tanjung Balai City must ensure that framing, performance comparisons, and narrative disruption do not escalate into slander, character assassination, or the exploitation of identity sentiments. The principle of qawlan ṣadīdan places the freedom of the electorate and the truth of information as the limits for the winning strategy.

Integration of Research Findings with Political Participation Theory

The findings of the dissertation placed political participation not only as the behavior of coming to the polling station, but as the output of a campaign communication system that shaped meaning, produced motivation, and organized citizen actions through local social networks. This framework can be integrated with political participation theory, which views participation as the result of resource interactions, psychological impulses, social norms, structural opportunities, and



perceived incentives, so that the decision to choose arises when citizens feel capable, feel necessary, and feel that their involvement is meaningful. The findings of the dissertation provide two contrasting contexts: Tanjung Balai as a multi-candidate competition and Asahan as a single-candidate race against a blank column. This difference in context makes it clear that participation is contingent, namely influenced by the structure of the competition and the way the public interprets elections (Kailthya & Kambhampati, 2022; Shen, 2023).

The concept of competition stimulus in participation theory can be read through Tanjung Balai's findings, which display message noise, narrative differentiation, and public attention struggle as characteristics of the multi-candidate arena. The tight competition increases the intensity of information exposure. It strengthens the relevance of the election as a social event, so that citizens are more encouraged to compare candidates and discuss choices. The increase in election salience in Tanjung Balai is related to the dimension of strong public issue discourse in the dissertation findings, because the issues of floods, garbage, and governance are common references in citizens' conversations. The findings of the dissertation show the relevance of working through competitive framing and performance comparison, so that residents view participation as a way of affirming their assessment of the condition of the city (Abdollahian et al., 2024; Hadarics, 2025).

The relevance of the issue in Tanjung Balai not only increases intentions, but also converts intentions into actions through social mechanisms that strengthen decisions. Findings on personal networking, neighborhood campaigning, and relational outreach show that political participation and choices are negotiated through family, work relationships, and the environment. The digital engagement dimension in Tanjung Balai's findings expands the reading of participation theory in contemporary contexts that place media as a catalyst. Digital engagement has an important dual consequence in participation theory because intensive exposure can mobilize. However, it can also lead to cynicism when the digital space is filled with negative comments and reputational attacks.

The viral momentum that stands out in Tanjung Balai shows a mechanism of participation that works through psychological impact and the formation of collective emotions. The dissertation findings show that viral content can shift perceptions of incumbents and strengthen the narrative of change, so that participation gains symbolic energy that quickly spreads and thickens the public conversation. The pragmatic calculations found at Tanjung Balai place participation within the framework of rational daily choices. Dissertation findings suggest that voting decisions can involve pragmatic considerations and small-scale practical support perceived as part of the campaign, so that incentives strengthen commitment to engage without removing the role of issues and social relations (Enyioha et al., 2024; von Borzyskowski et al., 2022).

The switch to Asahan shows how participation theory explains the decline in participation when the competition stimulus weakens, and perceived outcomes are predictable. The dissertation findings showed that inevitability perception, reduced excitement, and low enthusiasm increased apathy risk, so that residents questioned the benefits of attending to vote. The dissertation findings show that defensive and motivational communication is used to reverse those perceptions by emphasizing the mandate and responsibility of participation. Citizen involvement through participatory and consultative models in Asahan strengthens the dimension of psychological engagement described by participation theory. Public dialogue and the absorption of aspirations make residents feel recognized, so that their sense of belonging to the process increases.

The role of local leaders and strong village leadership in Asahan shows a mobilization mechanism known as participation theory as recruitment networks. The findings of the dissertation

place village heads, RT/RW, and environmental leaders as the most effective channels to invite residents, because they have closeness and authority in their daily lives. This integration shows that recruitment networks increase participation by reducing information costs, increasing norm pressures, and providing a sense of security that voting actions align with community expectations (Chin, 2021; McIlwaine et al., 2023). The dimensions of structural support and local coordination in Asahan show that participation also depends on organizational capacity to reduce practical barriers (Alodat et al., 2023; Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022).

The barriers to access through infrastructure issues and disaster conditions in Asahan's findings show the cost component of participation emphasized by the theory of rational participation. Mobility costs, weather risks, and difficulty in access increase opportunity costs, so that residents who are already low in enthusiasm are more likely to choose not to attend. Electoral vigilance in Asahan's findings strengthens the dimensions of trust and perceived integrity, which are important for participation. The dissertation findings show that oversight of the process and messages about order at polling stations strengthen the belief that votes are counted, so participation is perceived as not in vain. Administrative continuity and development continuity as opportunities in Asahan show how the campaign builds benefit perception for participation.

A comparison of the two contexts shows that participation theory can be read as a mobilization situation that relies on high salience, discourse competition, and acceleration of public emotions, while Asahan is a mobilization situation that relies on community norms, local leadership, and the meaning of mandates (Cofie et al., 2023; Patwary & Esha, 2025). The overall integration of the findings with the theory of political participation makes it clear that participation in local elections is formed through two paths that are equally valid but have different pressures: the competitive-perception path in Tanjung Balai and the legitimitative-normative path in Asahan. The competitive-perceptual path mobilizes through public issues, virality, and shifting perceptions that are then locked in by environmental networks and personal relationships. The legitimacy-normative path mobilizes through the meaning of participation, encouragement of local figures, repetition of community forums, and strengthening trust in the process, so that turnout is produced as a social norm that supports the legitimacy of results.

Political participation in the Islamic perspective is not limited to the presence of the community at the polling station, but includes involvement in discussing, assessing, and determining common affairs. Surah Ash-Syūrā verse 38 places deliberation as one of the characteristics of the believing community. Ibn Katsir explained that a society that makes deliberation a principle does not make important decisions unilaterally, but considers the views of interested parties. This interpretation expands the theory of political participation of Verba, Nie, and Kim by presenting an ethical dimension in the form of equality, openness, and interest orientation in citizen involvement (Ibn Katsir, 2018; al-Maḥallī & al-Suyūfī, 2015; Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2016). The principle of deliberation emphasizes that legitimacy is not only generated from the number of votes, but also from the process of communication that provides space for differences, freedom of choice, and the responsibility of maintaining the unity of society after the contestation is over.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study confirms that the winning campaign model in the Asahan and Tanjung Balai Regional Elections is not only determined by the intensity of the campaign, but also by the way the candidate pairs read the competition structure and turn it into a communication design that is relevant to voter psychology, the configuration of local actors, and the dynamics of public conversation that forms support and legitimacy. Asahan frames communication as a work of electoral legitimacy, so that the winning design is oriented toward mobilizing participation, consolidating local social networks, and strengthening the meaning of elections so they are not perceived as mere formalities against empty columns. Tanjung Balai places communication as a work of competitive differentiation, so that the winning design focuses on audience segmentation, strengthening candidate identities through differentiating narratives, accelerating cross-channel message distribution, and issue management to respond to dense message competition.

Asahan has an opportunity for ease of consolidation due to the absence of rival candidates, so that the narrative of stability, program sustainability, and leadership certainty is easier to produce and circulate. However, the main obstacle is legitimacy, determined by voter participation, political saturation, and the risk of a perception of "elections without competition" that reduces enthusiasm. Tanjung Balai has an opportunity to open up a space for differentiation for incumbents and the formation of momentum issues that can shift public preferences. However, the main obstacles are message density, volatility of public opinion, negative narrative attacks, and competition between support networks, which make message acceptance highly dependent on response speed and framing accuracy. Asahan emphasized that legitimacy is more produced through the success of mobilizing social participation and acceptance. In contrast, Tanjung Balai emphasized that support is more contested through image battles, issue control, and the ability to maintain narrative cohesion amid the turbulence of public conversation.

REFERENCES

- Abdollahian, M., Zeng, Y., & Thomas, J. (2024). Happiness and the state: Going beyond GDP with political performance measures for societal subjective well-being. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100981>
- Adamczewska, K. (2024). Interactive election campaigns on social media? Flow of political information among journalists and politicians as an element of the communication strategy of political actors. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 21(1), 23–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2023.2222717>
- Aguilar-Pardo, D. (2024). Linguistic differences in the political communication of winning mayors in Colombia's local elections between 2019 and 2023/Diferencias lingüísticas en la comunicación política de gobernantes ganadores en las elecciones locales 2019–23 en Colombia. *International Journal of Social Psychology*, 39(3), 451–472. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02134748241281586>
- Al-Razi, F. al-D. (2012). *Mafatih al-Ghaib al-Mushtahar bi al-Tafsir al-Kabir* (7th ed.). Daar al-Hadith.
- Al-Zamakhshary. (1995). *Al-Kasyaf an Haqiqi al-Tanzil wa Uyuuni al-Aqowili fi al-Wujuuh al-Takwil*. Daar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiah.



- Ali, F., Awais, M., & Faran, M. (2021). Social media use and political polarization: The mediating role of political engagement and political loyalty. *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.13187/IJMIL.2021.1.34>
- Alodat, A. M., Al-Qora'n, L. F., & Abu Hamoud, M. (2023). Social media platforms and political participation: A study of Jordanian youth engagement. *Social Sciences*, 12(7). <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12070402>
- Anom, E., Vina, E., & Samani, M. C. (2024). Political communication strategy in the 2024 Indonesia's presidential election. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 40(2), 296–309. <https://doi.org/10.17576/jkmjc-2024-4002-17>
- As-Suyuthi, J., & Al-Mahally, J. M. I. A. (2015). *Tafsir Al-Jalalain: Tafsir Jalalain terjemah*.
- Barrero, A., Ovaskainen, O., Traba, J., & Gómez-Catasús, J. (2023). Co-occurrence patterns in a steppe bird community: Insights into the role of dominance and competition. *Oikos*, 2023(5). <https://doi.org/10.1111/oik.09780>
- Baum, S. (2021). Research questions and research design. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-1677-8_2
- Berestova, A., Kim, D. Y., & Kim, S. Y. (2022). Consumers' active reaction to brands taking stands on public issues on Twitter. *Sustainability*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14010567>
- Carotenuto, F., Bisignano, A., Brilli, L., Gualtieri, G., & Giovannini, L. (2023). Low-cost air quality monitoring networks for long-term field campaigns: A review. *Meteorological Applications*, 30(6). <https://doi.org/10.1002/met.2161>
- Casero-Ripollés, A. (2021). Influencers in the political conversation on Twitter: Identifying digital authority with big data. *Sustainability*, 13(5). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13052851>
- Chen, H. C., Lee, C. H., Seekings, T. B. W., & Nguyen, L. B. (2025). Assessing the public's social acceptance of renewable energy management in Taiwan. *Land*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.3390/land14010121>
- Cheng, B. (2024). Research and practical exploration of innovative pedagogy of civic and political education content in colleges and universities facing the digital era. *Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.2478/amns-2024-2926>
- Cheng, Z., Marcos-Marne, H., & Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2024). Birds of a feather get angrier together: Social media news use and social media political homophily as antecedents of political anger. *Political Behavior*, 46(2). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-023-09864-z>
- Chin, C. (2021). Multiculturalism and nationalism: Models of belonging to diverse political community. *Nations and Nationalism*, 27(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12657>
- Cofie, L. E., Barrington, C., Cope, K., LePrevost, C. E., & Singh, K. (2023). Increasing health facility childbirth in Ghana: The role of network and community norms. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-023-05513-9>
- Cosby, A. E., Andriatsitohaina, B., Archie, R., Jules, C., McGoogan, K. C., Persram, M., Razafitsalama, M., Young, A., & Steffens, T. S. (2025). Primate conservation: A public issue? *American Journal of Primatology*, 87(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajp.23632>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2022). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cristache, N., Florea, N. V., Năstase, M., Croitoru, G., Fortea, C., & Tureatca, M. V. (2025). The influence of political, social and economic factors on the acceptance of technology in the

- workplace in the context of Industrial Revolution 4.0. *Amfiteatru Economic*, 27(68). <https://doi.org/10.24818/EA/2025/68/76>
- Dong, T. (2025). The analytical framework for assessing competition structure of IP market. *Asia Pacific Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 19(4). <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJIE-08-2024-0165>
- Dongyan, C., Keying, G., Caijun, Z., & Yu, H. (2022). Construction of ideological and political evaluation index system of college English curriculum based on CIPP. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.53789/j.1653-0465.2022.0202.015>
- Draganidis, A., Fernando, A. N., West, M. L., & Sharp, G. (2024). Social media delivered mental health campaigns and public service announcements: A systematic literature review of public engagement and help-seeking behaviours. *Social Science & Medicine*, 359. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.117231>
- Ekman, M. (2024). Political communication as television news: Party-produced news of the Sweden Democrats during the 2022 election campaign. *Nordicom Review*, 45, 66–91. <https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2024-0008>
- Enyioha, C., Clark, S. A., Jarman, K. L., Philips, R., Kleber, S., Thrasher, J. F., & Goldstein, A. O. (2024). Message development for a communication campaign to support health warning labels on cigars: A qualitative study. *BMC Public Health*, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-21097-1>
- Flick, U. (2020). *Doing triangulation and mixed methods*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529716634>
- Flick, U. (2022). Revitalising triangulation for designing multi-perspective qualitative research. In *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research design*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529770278.n40>
- Gearhart, S. (2024). Hispanic political engagement in the 2018 Texas Senate election: How political communication and perceived candidate ethnicity shape engagement. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 17(4), 388–407. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2024.2406504>
- Gier-Reinartz, N. R., & Harms, R. (2024). Social Acceptance Scale—Development of an instrument for the differentiated measurement of social acceptance in agricultural livestock farming. *Journal of Consumer Protection and Food Safety*, 19(Suppl. 1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00003-024-01490-z>
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., González-González, P., & Goyanes, M. (2025). Pathways to political persuasion: Linking online, social media, and fake news with political attitude change through political discussion. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 69(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642221118272>
- Gleeson, D. (2021). Research questions and research design. In *Educational research and inquiry*. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474243834.ch-005>
- Gommeh, E., Dijstelbloem, H., & Metze, T. (2021). Visual discourse coalitions: Visualization and discourse formation in controversies over shale gas development. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 23(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1523908X.2020.1823208>
- Gulyas, A., & Hess, K. (2024). The three “Cs” of digital local journalism: Community, commitment and continuity. *Digital Journalism*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2023.2211639>



- Haas, I. J., Baker, M. N., & Gonzalez, F. J. (2021). Political uncertainty moderates neural evaluation of incongruent policy positions. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 376(1822). <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2020.0138>
- Hadarics, M. (2025). Blindfolding political trust: The palliative effect of trust-based ignorance of political performance problems. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 165(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2023.2298886>
- Hamka. (2012). *Tafsir Al-Azhar* (4th ed.). Pustaka Nasional.
- Harmawati, Y., Sapriya, Abdulkarim, A., Bestari, P., & Sari, B. I. (2024). Data of digital literacy level measurement of Indonesian students: Based on the components of ability to use media, advanced use of digital media, managing digital learning platforms, and ethics and safety in the use of digital media. *Data in Brief*, 54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2024.110397>
- Hasan, M. (2024). The Muslim mass contacts campaign: Analysis of a strategy of political mobilization. In *Congress and Indian nationalism: The pre-independence phase* (pp. 198–222). <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520377370-011>
- Hellzén, O., Kjällman Alm, A., & Holmström Rising, M. (2022). Primary healthcare nurses' views on digital healthcare communication and continuity of care: A deductive and inductive content analysis. *Nursing Reports*, 12(4). <https://doi.org/10.3390/nursrep12040091>
- Hermawan, V. (2025). Transparency in government political communication: Challenges and opportunities. *Jurnal Ekonomi*, 14.
- Idogho, J. A. (2025). Impact of strategic communication on political leadership in Delta State: A case study of the 2023 gubernatorial election. *Journal of African Films and Diaspora Studies*, 8(2), 111–128. <https://doi.org/10.31920/2516-2713/2025/v8n2a6>
- Kailthya, S., & Kambhampati, U. (2022). Political competition and public healthcare: Evidence from India. *World Development*, 153. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.105820>
- Karafil, A. Y., & Ulaş, M. (2023). An evaluation of athletes' opinions on communication barriers caused by coaches in the interpersonal communication process. *Physical Culture and Sport: Studies and Research*, 102(1). <https://doi.org/10.2478/pcssr-2024-0003>
- Karwacka, A. (2022). Political communication in local elections: A comparative analysis of France and Poland. *French Politics*, 20(2), 167–181. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41253-022-00170-4>
- Kebede, A. S., Ozolins, L. L., Holst, H., & Galvin, K. (2022). Digital engagement of older adults: Scoping review. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 24(12). <https://doi.org/10.2196/40192>
- Koa, M. (2021). Communication strategies of winning hearts and minds: The case of the Muslim Brotherhood's political communication campaign post Morsi's downfall. *Global Media and Communication*, 17(1), 87–120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742766520982016>
- KPU Asahan. (2024). *Penetapan hasil pemilihan Bupati dan Wakil Bupati Kabupaten Asahan tahun 2024*. <https://kab-asahan.kpu.go.id/blog/read/penetapan-hasil-pemilihan-bupati-dan-wakil-bupati-kabupaten-asahan-tahun-2024>
- KPU Tanjungbalai. (2024). *Pemilihan Walikota dan Wakil Walikota Tanjung Balai tahun 2024*. <https://kota-tanjungbalai.kpu.go.id/page/read/pemilihan-walikota-dan-wakil-walikota-tanjung-balai-tahun-2024>
- Kujawa, I. (2022). Irony in political election speeches as a strategy in the fight for electors. *Linguistische Treffen in Wrocław*, 22(11), 101–113. <https://doi.org/10.23817/lingtreff.22-7>

- Lai, K., & Fortwengel, J. (2025). Constructing an organizational identity with political ideology: The case of Huawei, 1987–2020. *Strategic Organization*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14761270251327988>
- Łukasik-Turecka, A. (2024). Political communication during the 2020 presidential election campaign in Poland: The role of medical experts. In *International comparative social studies* (Vol. 59, pp. 393–405). https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004690622_026
- Mani, L. (2025). Live streaming, personal branding and political communication: Gen Z's active participation in the 2024 Indonesian presidential election. *Multidisciplinary Science Journal*, 7(4). <https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2025186>
- McIlwaine, C., Krenzinger, M., Rizzini Ansari, M., Resende, N. C., Gonçalves Leal, J., & Vieira, F. (2023). Building emotional-political communities to address gendered violence against women and girls during COVID-19 in the favelas of Maré, Rio de Janeiro. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 24(3–4). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2022.2065697>
- Menegatto, M., Bobbio, A., Freschi, G., & Zamperini, A. (2025). The social acceptance of renewable energy communities: The role of socio-political control and impure altruism. *Climate*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/cli13030055>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Moreno-Díaz, J. (2025). Electoral trends and strategies on Instagram: Evolution and analysis of political communication in the 2023 Community of Madrid elections. *Doxa Comunicación*, 41, 143–170. <https://doi.org/10.31921/doxacom.n41a2547>
- Moret-Soler, D. (2022). Digital negativity as a campaign communication strategy in the 2021 Community of Madrid elections on Twitter. *Prisma Social*, 39, 48–73. <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?partnerID=HzOxMe3b&scp=85144122768&origin=inward>
- Musi, E., Garcia Aguila, E. E., & Federico, L. (2024). Botlitica: A generative AI-based tool to assist journalists in navigating political propaganda campaigns. *Studies in Communication Sciences*, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.24434/j.scoms.2024.01.4270>
- Ofori, E., & Lockee, B. B. (2021). Next generation mobile learning: Leveraging message design considerations for learning and accessibility. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 9(4). <https://doi.org/10.22492/ije.9.4.07>
- Orosa, B. G. (2022). Political communication and emerging strategies in digital electoral campaigns during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Palabra Clave*, 25(1). <https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2022.25.1.6>
- Patwary, M. H., & Esha, S. N. (2025). Interplay of education and community norms in justifying intimate partner violence among ever-married women aged 15–49 years in Bangladesh: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health*, 25(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-025-22348-5>
- Pohan, I. A. (2025). Yudhoyono and Jokowi's political leadership in Indonesia: A comparison of vision, communication, longevity, and election's success. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik*, 29(1), 17–34. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jsp.93503>
- Premathilake, G. W., & Li, H. (2024). Users' responses to humanoid social robots: A social response view. *Telematics and Informatics*, 91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2024.102146>

- Primayanti, N. W., & Puspita, V. (2022). Local wisdom narrative in environmental campaign. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2022.2090062>
- Qi, X. (2023). Construction of ideological and political evaluation system for college Chinese courses in vocational colleges based on the theoretical framework of CIPP evaluation model. *International Journal of Education and Humanities*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.54097/ijeh.v8i3.8727>
- Rejekiningsih, T., Sari, D. I., Qodr, T. S., Ariana, Y., & Sumaryati, S. (2024). Optimization of digital media utilization for anti-bullying campaigns among Generation Z. *JTP—Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan*, 26(2). <https://doi.org/10.21009/jtp.v26i2.48023>
- Rožman, M., & Štrukelj, T. (2021). Organisational climate components and their impact on work engagement of employees in medium-sized organisations. *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 34(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2020.1804967>
- Sandes, J. (2025). Political personalization on Instagram: Lula da Silva's strategy for the 2022 election year. *Estudos em Comunicação*, 40, 121–137. <https://doi.org/10.25768/1646-4974n40a07>
- Schwab, S., Markus, S., & Hassani, S. (2024). Teachers' feedback in the context of students' social acceptance, students' well-being in school and students' emotions. *Educational Studies*, 50(5). <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2021.2023475>
- Shangguan, R., & Zha, Z. (2025). The impact of framing effects, competitive state, and time pressure on risk-taking decisions in tennis players of different skill levels. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1573070>
- Shen, J. (2023). State capacity, political competition and public goods provision: A cross-national comparative study. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20578911231161248>
- Shihab, M. Q. (2015). *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* (2nd ed.). Lentera Hati.
- Siebert, R., Herzig, C., & Birringer, M. (2022). Strategic framing of genome editing in agriculture: An analysis of the debate in Germany in the run-up to the European Court of Justice ruling. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 39(2). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-021-10274-2>
- Soares, F. B. (2024). Political memes, humor and elections: Meme usages as propagation strategy on Twitter. *Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada*, 23(2). <https://doi.org/10.1590/1984-6398202317859>
- Sofyan, N. (2025). Communication strategy of Wonogiri General Election Commission based on local wisdom: A case study of the efforts to increase public awareness of the importance of participating in elections through cultural events in 2023. In *Studies in Big Data* (Vol. 170, pp. 69–79). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-83915-3_6
- Stevani, & Robin, P. (2023). Meaning of creative campaign in Arief Muhammad's billboards "Ready to be Number 1": Roland Barthes semiotics analysis. *Jurnal Multidisiplin Madani*, 3(7). <https://doi.org/10.55927/mudima.v3i7.4950>
- Sudarma, I. K., Prabawa, D. G. A. P., & Suartama, I. K. (2022). The application of information processing theory to design digital content in learning message design course. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, 12(10). <https://doi.org/10.18178/ijiet.2022.12.10.1718>

- Sun, M., Piao, M., & Jia, Z. (2024). The impact of alexithymia, anxiety, social pressure, and academic burnout on depression in Chinese university students: An analysis based on SEM. *BMC Psychology*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-02262-y>
- Takona, J. P. (2024). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches, sixth edition. *Quality & Quantity*, 58(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-023-01798-2>
- Tirado-García, A. (2021). Photo-text interaction as a political communication strategy on Instagram during the campaign for the Spanish election of 28 April 2019. *Profesional de la Información*, 30(2). <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2021.mar.23>
- Uotila, U., Keskiniva, K., Junnonen, J. M., & Saari, A. (2024). Developing engineering students' generic and professional skills through a consultative approach to project-based learning. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 49(4). <https://doi.org/10.1080/03043797.2023.2286329>
- Vaccari, C. (2022). The international and post-disciplinary journey of political communication: Reflections on “Media-centric and politics-centric views of media and democracy: A longitudinal analysis of Political Communication and the International Journal of Press/Politics.” *Political Communication*, 39(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2021.1966599>
- van der Wilt, F. (2024). The relation between social acceptance and school well-being in early childhood. *Infant and Child Development*, 33(3). <https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.2470>
- von Borzyskowski, I., Daxecker, U., & Kuhn, P. M. (2022). Fear of campaign violence and support for democracy and autocracy. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 39(5). <https://doi.org/10.1177/07388942211026319>
- Wang, Y., Lu, L., Zhou, Z., & Zhu, J. (2022). Empathic narrative of online political communication. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.869496>
- Weyant, E. (2022). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches, 5th edition. *Journal of Electronic Resources in Medical Libraries*, 19(1–2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/15424065.2022.2046231>
- Willeck, C., & Mendelberg, T. (2022). Education and political participation. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 25. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051120-014235>
- Zhang, Q. (2025). Social-comparison-based pedagogies for language learning through ludicization technology: Effects of pluralist learning and conformity-driven designs on performative and affective factors. *American Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.55284/ajssh.v10i2.1678>

